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Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status

Report of the Secretary-General

Summary

The present report contains an account of new developments and the assistance accorded to Mongolia by the Secretariat and relevant United Nations bodies since the issuance of the previous report on this subject (A/61/164). During the reporting period, the Office for Disarmament Affairs, through its Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch, held a series of consultations with Mongolia and relevant United Nations bodies on ways and means to consolidate Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status. Mongolia has continued to seek international recognition for and the institutionalization of its nuclear-weapon-free status and is aiming to conclude a legal instrument on that status with its two immediate neighbours, China and the Russian Federation, with a separate draft protocol to be signed by the other nuclear-weapon States. Mongolia presented a draft trilateral treaty on its nuclear-weapon-free status to China and the Russian Federation in September 2007.

During the reporting period, the International Atomic Energy Agency carried out on-site verification activities in Mongolia in accordance with its safeguards agreement and additional protocol. In this context, the Agency was able to conclude that, for 2007, declared nuclear material in Mongolia remained in peaceful activities.

The findings and recommendations of the report on the economic and ecological vulnerabilities of Mongolia, issued by the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP), the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Environment Programme, have been incorporated into the common country

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assessment for the period from 2007 to 2011 and all five United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2007-2011) outcomes and related outputs. UNDP is providing support to follow up on the recommendations of the report by focusing on strengthening the economic security and preserving the ecological balance of Mongolia. Furthermore, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs has provided input for the economic and social advancement of Mongolia, primarily through undertaking operational developmental activities and the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has been engaged in assisting Mongolia in building its technical and human capacity for disaster management.

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I. Introduction

1. By its resolution 61/87, entitled "Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status", the General Assembly invited Member States to continue to cooperate with Mongolia in taking the necessary measures to consolidate and strengthen Mongolia's independence, sovereignty and territorial integrity, the inviolability of its borders, its independent foreign policy, its economic security and its ecological balance, as well as its nuclear-weapon-free status. The Assembly requested the Secretary-General and relevant United Nations bodies to continue to provide assistance to Mongolia in implementing the aforementioned necessary measures. It also requested the Secretary-General to report to the Assembly at its sixty-third session on the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

II. Activities related to Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status

2. Since the submission of the previous report of the Secretary-General on this subject (A/61/164), the Office for Disarmament Affairs, through its Weapons of Mass Destruction Branch, has continued to provide assistance to Mongolia in taking the necessary measures to consolidate and strengthen its nuclear-weapon-free status. The Branch organized two meetings, on 30 January and 28 May 2008, of a consultative group of United Nations departments, programmes, funds and agencies to exchange information on activities aimed at implementing resolution 61/87 and to discuss the preparation of the 2008 report of the Secretary-General on the subject. Officials from the Department of Economic and Social Affairs, the Department of Political Affairs, the International Atomic Energy Agency (IAEA), the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and the Office of the High Representative for the Least Developed Countries, Landlocked Developing Countries and Small Island Developing States, and representatives of Mongolia attended the meetings.

3. Mongolia has continued to vigorously seek international recognition for and the institutionalization of its nuclear-weapon-free status by working to conclude a legal instrument on its status with its two immediate neighbours, China and the Russian Federation, with a separate protocol to be signed by the other nuclear-weapon States, and by working to establish recognition of its status as a norm.

4. Following an initial contact in 2002, Mongolia presented a draft trilateral treaty on its nuclear-weapon-free status to China and the Russian Federation in September 2007. The draft was based on the elements of a treaty that Mongolia had presented to China and the Russian Federation at the initial contact meeting and included comments provided by those countries. The draft, in principle, reflects basic provisions usually embodied in international treaties establishing nuclear-weapon-free zones, taking into consideration the specific circumstances of Mongolia (i.e., the fact that it shares borders with two nuclear-weapon States). The draft clearly spells out the obligations of Mongolia, as well as commitments by its two neighbours. It also addresses cooperation in strengthening its nuclear-weapon-free status, the peaceful uses of nuclear energy, the physical protection of nuclear material, notification of nuclear-related activities and early warning in case of a nuclear accident. As in the case of traditional nuclear-weapon-free zones, the draft deals with control and verification issues without necessarily setting up a standing

mechanism. A draft protocol intended for signature by the other three nuclear-weapon States, to respect the treaty and contribute to its full implementation, is also proposed.

5. Numerous references at the bilateral and multilateral levels attest to international recognition and consolidation of the nuclear-weapon-free status of Mongolia as a norm. Documents containing references supporting Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status include the following:

(a) Final document of the fourteenth Conference of Heads of State or Government of the Non-Aligned Movement, held in Havana from 11 to 16 September 2006 ("The Heads of State or Government believed that the establishment of nuclear-weapon-free zones created by the treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok, Pelindaba and Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status are positive steps and important measures towards strengthening global nuclear disarmament and non-proliferation.");

(b) The Moscow declaration of 8 December 2006 ("The Russian Federation reaffirms its commitment to the joint statement of the five nuclear-weapon States on security assurances in connection with Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status, and considers that, in addition to contributing to strengthening the nuclear non-proliferation regime, this status is an important confidence-building measure in North-East Asia and beyond.");

(c) Joint communiqué of Mongolia and the Russian Federation of 13 April 2008, issued at the conclusion of the official visit of the Prime Minister of Mongolia, S. Bayar, to the Russian Federation from 10 to 13 April 2008 ("The Russian Federation, being a member of the nuclear non-proliferation treaty, reaffirms the efforts of Mongolia to strengthen its non-nuclear status and the security guarantee granted to Mongolia according to United Nations Security Council resolution 984 (1995) of 11 April 1995, as reflected in the joint statement of the nuclear Powers, the permanent members of the United Nations Security Council, dated 5 October 2000.").

6. In response to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), Mongolia continuing to enhance its border controls to better detect illicit trafficking in nuclear and radiological materials. Mongolia covers a vast territory and shares long borders with its two neighbours. Its unique geographic characteristics and small population base present a serious border management challenge at a time of increased concern over transnational crimes, including trafficking in nuclear-related items. In response to the appeal of Mongolia to the Committee established pursuant to Security Council resolution 1540 (2004), in 2007 the Government of the United States of America offered to fund a project to strengthen the technical capabilities of Mongolia in connection with export and import controls over nuclear and other radioactive materials. The project is aimed at improving technical systems for the detection and identification of nuclear and other radioactive materials at points of entry/exit in Mongolia. Consequently, a Government-to-Government memorandum of understanding concerning cooperation to prevent illicit trafficking in nuclear and other radioactive materials was signed on 23 October 2007, during the visit by the President of Mongolia to the United States of America. Under the memorandum of understanding, the United States of America would provide technical assistance in the form of equipment and materials, as well as training and services, for use at

points of entry/exit in Mongolia for the purpose of detecting and interdicting illicit trafficking on special nuclear material and other radioactive material.

7. Mongolia is also continuing to promote awareness regarding its security and nuclear-weapon-free status. The Ministry of Foreign Affairs of Mongolia organized a round-table discussion on Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status and related issues on 28 March 2008. Mongolia submitted a working paper on nuclear-weapon-free zones (NPT/CONF.2010/PC.II/WP.1) to the second session of the Preparatory Committee for the 2010 Review Conference of the Parties to the Treaty on the Non-Proliferation of Nuclear Weapons, held in Geneva from 28 April to 9 May 2008. Moreover, Mongolia submitted a document entitled "Memorandum of the Government of Mongolia on promoting the country's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status"(A/63/73-S/2008/297) for circulation as a document of the General Assembly and of the Security Council. In 2008, the focal point for Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status initiated the establishment of official contacts with the relevant agencies and authorities responsible for the Treaties of Tlatelolco, Rarotonga, Bangkok and Pelindaba and the Central Asian Nuclear-Weapon-Free Zone Treaty. The focal point has so far received positive responses from the Agency for the Prohibition of Nuclear Weapons in Latin America and the Caribbean and the secretariat of the African Union.

8. During the reporting period, IAEA carried out on-site verification activities at the Isotope Centre waste storage facility in Ulaanbaatar and the Nuclear Research Centre of the National University of Mongolia in accordance with the safeguards agreement and additional protocol. In this context, IAEA was able to conclude that, for 2007, declared nuclear material in Mongolia remained in peaceful activities. In addition, consultations were conducted with regard to the Agency's proposal to amend Mongolia's small quantities protocol, in line with the decision of the IAEA Board of Governors of September 2005.

9. In September 2007, IAEA organized and conducted a radiation safety infrastructure appraisal mission to assess the regulatory infrastructure of Mongolia for radiation safety. At the end of the mission, the appraisal team made two recommendations to the Government of Mongolia: (a) to strengthen the role of the nuclear regulatory authority so that it could develop regulations and establish direct reporting arrangements with the responsible Minister or the Prime Minister; and (b) to initiate, as a matter priority, measures to design and construct a safe and secure radioactive waste storage facility, in particular for the irradiation sources from the Isotope Centre and the Institute of Physics. As a follow-up to those recommendations, the Government of Mongolia has taken a number of steps to strengthen the nuclear regulatory authority and increase the safety of storage of irradiation sources.

10. The issue of the utilization of the vast uranium resources of Mongolia and the introduction of nuclear power encompasses both nuclear and non-nuclear aspects of the international security of the country. The dependence of Mongolia on petroleum imports, insufficient domestic energy supplies and the urgent need to address urban air pollution are some of the factors that led the Government to formulate a draft national concept paper for the utilization of uranium and nuclear power. The implementation of a step-by-step policy on the use of nuclear energy and the construction of a nuclear power plant is also viewed in the context of the Millennium Development Goals and based on the comprehensive national

development strategy of Mongolia, which was adopted by the State Great Khural (parliament) on 31 January 2008.

11. Mongolia is seeking to become a developer, a processor and an exporter of uranium. It is also interested in introducing nuclear power for energy, including for heating purposes, as a cleaner alternative to coal plants. The use of nuclear power is considered to be an important lever in ensuring the sustainable development and national energy security of Mongolia and improving the living standards of its people. A number of nuclear-capable States, listed in annex 2 to the Comprehensive Nuclear-Test-Ban Treaty, have expressed interest, and readiness to cooperate, in uranium prospecting, exploration and refining on Mongolian territory and in the building of small or medium-sized nuclear power stations.

12. Mongolia believes that all of its activities relating to uranium utilization and the introduction of nuclear power must fully comply with IAEA safeguards and other internationally accepted standards, rules and regulations. Mongolia has therefore submitted its draft national concept paper to IAEA, seeking the Agency's technical and legal assistance. The Agency has offered to dispatch two expert teams to conduct studies on the country's prospects for uranium utilization and the introduction of nuclear power as the initial stage of IAEA assistance in those newly emerging areas of cooperation.

III. Non-nuclear aspects of Mongolia's international security

13. The findings and recommendations of the report on the economic and ecological vulnerabilities of Mongolia, carried out with support from UNDP and in collaboration with the Department of Economic and Social Affairs and the United Nations Environment Programme, have been incorporated in the common country assessment for the period from 2007 to 2011 and all five United Nations Development Assistance Framework (2007-2011) outcomes and related outputs.

14. UNDP is currently providing support to Mongolia by focusing on strengthening the economic security and preserving the ecological balance of the country. This includes projects focusing on the Millennium Development Goals, trade, disaster management and environmental governance:

(a) In the context of the Millennium Development Goal-based national development strategy, approved in 2008 by the Mongolian parliament, UNDP Mongolia is supporting the Government in the formulation of a financing strategy which will help target the budget to achieve the Millennium Development Goals and other poverty reduction goals, while at the same time helping to align foreign aid to the Millennium Development Goals;

(b) Under its ongoing trade and human development project for inclusive growth, UNDP is supporting the Ministry of Trade in formulating a human-development-focused medium-term trade/export strategy;

(c) UNDP has, since 2002, provided support for disaster management through its Mongolian disaster management project. The document relating to the third phase of that project was signed in April 2008. The third phase will strengthen disaster preparedness and mitigation through support for capacity-building at all levels, including at the community level, and help mitigate and manage disasters, including man-made disasters such as chemical spills;

(d) Under the ongoing environmental governance project, UNDP Mongolia is supporting a technical assessment of the capacity of existing institutions and laws to address environmental issues, with the aim of identifying overlaps, gaps and contradictions in laws and institutional functions. The project is aimed at strengthening capacities for intersectoral environment planning, monitoring and coordination at all levels and supporting timely reporting and follow-up of United Nations conventions.

15. The Department of Economic and Social Affairs has provided input for the economic and social advancement of Mongolia, primarily through undertaking operational developmental activities. These include a number of international technical cooperation workshops, organized by the Department, with the participation of officials and experts from Mongolia and other countries, to discuss social development and public investment policies.

16. In February 2008, at a meeting with the Permanent Representative of Mongolia in New York, the Department of Economic and Social Affairs contributed concrete suggestions on mining development policy in Mongolia, including the organization of study tours for Government officials to a select number of countries with extensive experience in rapid mining growth, its impact and opportunities; technical advisory services on needs and aspirations; in-country workshops to explore issues and policies; as well as measures aimed at building the capacity of the public sector to deal with foreign investors.

17. There has been significant support from the United Nations in the area of disaster management, which has led to the establishment of a non-military National Disaster Management Agency. Since the 2004 and 2005 preparedness assessment missions of the United Nations Disaster Assessment and Coordination team, the Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs has kept in regular contact with the Government of Mongolia on preparedness-related activities, including preparedness for natural disasters and an avian flu pandemic, as well as the promotion of civil-military cooperation.

IV. Conclusion

18. It has been 10 years since the General Assembly unanimously adopted the first resolution on Mongolia's international security and nuclear-weapon-free status (resolution 53/77 D), in 1998. On the occasion of the fifteenth anniversary of the establishment of its nuclear-weapon-free status in 2007, the President of Mongolia, Nambar Enkhbayar, sent a letter to the Secretary-General expressing his deep gratitude for the firm support of the organization for Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status. As described in the present report, Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status is being consolidated and institutionalized and gaining wider recognition. The Government of Mongolia informed the Office for Disarmament Affairs that it presented a draft trilateral treaty on its nuclear-weapon-free status to China and the Russian Federation in September 2007 as a follow-up to its initial contact with the two countries in 2002. Furthermore, various departments, programmes, funds and agencies of the United Nations have continued to assist Mongolia in coping with its

economic and ecological vulnerabilities. The Secretary-General hopes that the assistance provided by the United Nations will further contribute to consolidating Mongolia's nuclear-weapon-free status and to achieving sustainable development and balanced growth, as well as reinforcing its efforts in the achievement of the Millennium Development Goals.